5

A DISCOVERIE OF

Six women preachers, in *Middlesex*, *Kent*, *Cambridgshire*, and *Salisbury*.

With a relation of their names, manners, life, and doctrine, pleasant to be read, but horrid to be judged of

Their Names are these.

Anne Hempstall.	*Susan May.*
Mary Bilbrow.	*Elizab. Bancroft.*
Ioane Bauford.	*Arabella Thomas.*

1 *Cor.* 14. 34, 35.

Let your women keepe silence in the Churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speake, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law.

And if they will learne any thing, let them aske their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speake in the Church.

Printed, 1641.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

The six women Preachers.

Anne Hempstall,
Joan Bauford
Elizabeth Bancroft,
and
Mary Bilbrowe,
Susan May,
Arabella Thomas.

IN ancient times have I read of Propheteſſes, but not untill of late heard of women Preachers, their onely reaſon or cauſe of preaching was, that there was a deficiency of good men, wherefore it was but fit, that vertuous women ſhould ſupply their places, they were (men they did mean) good for nothing, but to make their texts good by expounding the language of the Beaſt, but they themſelves would preach nothing, but ſuch things as the ſpirit ſhould move them.

The firſt and chief of this female and Sacerdoticall function, was one *Anne Hempſtall*, living in the Pariſh of Saint *Andrews Holborne*, neere *London*, and in the County of *Middleſex*, upon a certain time, ſhe having a minde, ſaid ſhee was moved to be zealouſly affected, called an aſſembly

of her bibbing Goſſips together, whoſe thoughts were bent more upon the ſtrong water bottle, then upon the uſes or doctrines which their holy ſiſter entended to expound unto them, but being come to the houſe of this *Anne Hempſtall*, zealous *Nan* ſpake to them after this manner.

Beloved ſiſters, this laſt night I dreamed a ſtrange Dream, moreover me thought I ſaw a viſion, in which *Anna* the Proheteſſe was preſented unto my view, the ſplendour of whoſe countenance did caſt me into a trance, wherein I lay untill the next morning, and the morning being come, I could conceive no interpretation of my Dream but this, that I ſhould imitate godly *Anna*, by preaching unto you, as ſhee propheſied to others, her ſpeech ſtrook them all into an aſtoniſhment, at which, this prophane *Anne* cryed out, Now doth the holy Ghoſt deſcend downe upon you, Wherefore give eare unto mee, then did ſhe begin to talke, and ſpeak unto them that which firſt came into her minde, but the chiefe matter of her Text was this, That womans haire was an adorning to her, but for a man to have long haire, it was a ſhame unto him, which the Scripture it ſelfe cryed fie upon; long did ſhee preach, and longer I dare avouch then ſome of the audience were willing, for ſome of them had as far home as White Chappell, wherefore her longitude might cauſe a brevitude of her ſucking the *Aquavitæ* bottle; two houres being expired, and the bottom of the ſtool beginning to look open-mouthed with her furious ſtamps, ſhee gave them

them as much peace as in her lay, and ſo concluded.

Mary Bilbrowe, one of the audience, being of the Pariſh of Saint *Giles* in the Fields, deſired them to be all with her the next morning, and after Sermon, they ſhould have a good fat pig to breakfaſt, beſides a cup of Sack or Claret to waſh it down, they all agreed unto it, and making uſe of all the Rhetorick which they were borne unto, they gave her thanks, and ſo for that time a Bottle of Ale or two being devoured, they departed every one to their owne houſes. The next morning, they met altogether at the houſe of *Mary Bilbrow*, whoſe husband was a good honeſt Bricklayer, and ſo ſoon as they came within the doores of her houſe, ſhee brought them all into her Parlour as ſhee called it, and inſteed of ſtools and cuſhions, ſhee had provided before hand, three bricks a piece for them to ſit upon, her reaſon was this, ſhee thought they would not ſit much, becauſe women to good inſtructions love ſtanding, her Pulpit was framed very ſubſtantially of brick, ſo high, that ſcarce any thing, but her ſtanding up tippet could be ſeen, ſhe began there very devoutly to make an *extempore* prayer, but before ſhee had ſcarce ſpoke twenty words, her daughter came running in very haſtily, telling her a Gentleman at *Bloomsbury* ſtaid to ſpeake with her about urgent occaſions, which hearing, ſhee lept out of her prayer into this ſerious meditatiõ, I think it be the Gentleman I was withall at *Saliſ-*

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bury Court, whom I promiſed this day to meet with all, whereupon ſhee left her Pulpit, ſpread the cloth, and brought her Goſſips in a pig according to her promiſe, who fed heartily, and ſo departed, ſo much at this time for *Middleſex* female Teachers.

Now give mee leave to take water, and goe to *Graveſend*, and ſo further into *Kent*, where I ſhall tell you of one *Joan Bauford* in the Town of *Feverſham*, who taught in *Fevers ham*, that husbands being ſuch as croſſed their wives wils might lawfully be forſaken.

Then was there one *Suſan May* of *Aſhford* in the County of *Kent* alſo which preached in a Barne there, that the Devill was the father of the Pope, The Pope the father of thoſe which did weare Surplices, wherefore conſequently the Devill was the Father of all thoſe which did not love Puritans.

There was likewiſe one *Elizabeth Bancroft* in *Ely* in *Cambridgſhire*, where Biſhop *Wren* firſt going to place Altars there, preached behind the miniſter upon a Saturday, that it was fit upon Sunday to Sacrifice the Popes Bird upon his own Altar.

Then laſtly there was one *Arabella Thomas* a Welch woman, which lived in the City of *Saliſbury*, which preached, and in her Sermon ſaid that none but ſuch painfull creatures as her ſelfe ſhould goe to Heaven, ſo thoſe Miniſters which did not preach twice upon every Sabbath day, ſhee ſaid that very ſhortly the black Raven by day, and the white

white Owle by night should scratch out their eyes.

Thus have I declared some of the female Academyes, but where their Vniversity is I cannot tell, but I suppose that Bedlam or Bridewell would be two convenient places for them, is it not sufficient that they may have the Gospell truly and sincerely Preached unto them, but that they must take their Ministers office from them? if there had been such a dearth of the Gospell as there was in the Reigne of Queene *Mary* it had beene an occasion some what urgent, But God bee praysed it was not so, but that they seemd to bee ambitious, and because they would have superiority, they would get upon a stoole, or in a tubb insteed of a pulpit. At this time I have described but six of them, ere long I feare I shall relate more, I pray God I have no cause, and so for this time I conclude.

FINIS.